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Griffiths' improvements

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In the paper entitled "Some Things of General Interest in the Bristol Medical Library,"¹ which Mr. L. M. Griffiths read before the Library Association, some bibliographical points are of medical interest.

The Bristol Library Society, dating from 1772, in course of time had practically taken possession of the premises of the City Library in King Street. In 1855, when it was known as the Bristol Library, it moved to premises near the top of Park Street, which are now being demolished to make room for the Art Gallery, and in 1856 it received the collection of books which had been formed by the doctors under the title of the Bristol Medical Library, which had been established in Orchard Street. The transfer was made on the condition that its efficiency should be constantly maintained. In 1867 the Society allied itself to the Bristol Philosophical and Literary Institution which had been founded in 1817, and in 1871, in the building known as the Museum and Library, the work of the two societies was carried on conjointly. Many difficulties beset the new institution; the stipulation about the medical books was not kept, and in 1893 Sir Charles Wathen, then Mayor of Bristol, undertook to pay the debts of the institution on condition that the shareholders presented the building and its contents to the city. The present Medical Library in Bristol, begun in 1891, now has the custody of the books which, belonging to the former Medical Library, have passed through so many vicissitudes of ownership.

The Bristol Medical Library does not possess a Caxton or a book printed by any of his contemporaries, or even a De Worde or a Pynson, but it has a book printed in the year IX.

In 1834 James Atkinson, a surgeon of York, issued a Medical Bibliography, including only A and B, which he did not intend to carry further. He says: "Bibliography is a dry occupation—a *caput mortuum*—it is a borrowed production, which brings very little grist to the mill; and so difficult and tedious is the object, of laying before our eyes all the real or reported copies or editions of the works enumerated, that almost every line of our reports may be suspected of falsehood. How are we to collect, how to produce, how to examine, the originals? Many books are so scarce, so sequestered in private hands, or in the mansions of the great, that even the keen eyes of luciferous booksellers cannot find them. And if they cannot, who the deuce can?" To render bibliography less dry, he added to his lists of books and periodical literature, which are very commendable, observations on the authors. The style of these may be gathered from two instances. Of Dr. Beddoes he says: "As an author, he appears to have been always in a hurry to reach the mart of novelty and invention, lest others should arrive there before him; so that it became, through life, a perpetual tilt and tournament for fame." He considers that Benjamin Brodie, who was more than a distinguished surgeon, has been fortunate in regard to his surgical pursuits, and adds that "generally speaking, the surgeon who exerts himself, however justly, as a philosopher and a naturalist, is often superseded in the surgical department by surgeons his inferiors. The idle world seldom gives a man credit for excellence in two attainments. Ex. gr. I plays a bit at top o' the fiddle; so neighbours say I can do nothing else." About bibliography generally Atkinson says: "No man's industry is mis-spent, if he merely clear the obstruction from any

¹ *Library Association Record*, June and July, 1901.

path; and the very attempt to show what is right, frequently exposes that which is wrong; so that the immediate blunders of one person rectify those of another: and he ever must deserve well of society who attempts improvement."

Remembering the difficulties and dangers of subject-classification, and our own mistakes, we shall be lenient to the errors of others, and "forbear to judge; for we are sinners all;" but it is difficult to forgive the British Museum for placing Ziemssen's *Cyclopædia of Medicine* in a list of bibliographical works, or for putting Holden's *Landmarks*, a book which deals with surface anatomy, under the heading of "History of Medicine," or worst of all, for classing under "Obstetrics," a work on "Child Labour," especially as it adds immediately after the entry that it was issued by the American Economic Association.

There is no better instance of careful bibliography than the *Index-Catalogue of the Library of the Surgeon-General of the United States Army*. Sixteen volumes were issued in the first series, and the sixth volume of the second series is in the letter H. The references to Cholera in the two volumes in the two series may be taken as an example of its value. In the first of these the titles cover 152 pages, and in the second 102, a fairly good start for the man who wants to get up the subject. It is only right to mention the *Index Medicus*, a monthly classified record of current medical literature, a work which grew out of the *Index-Catalogue*. After twenty-one years of existence, during which it passed through many difficulties, it came through insufficient support to an end. It is a book simply indispensable to the librarian and the student. The most expert cataloguer must admit its thoroughness and its splendid accuracy. Its place has been excellently filled by *Bibliographia Medica*, working on almost exactly similar lines, but incorporating the Dewey system. It is issued by the *Institut de Bibliographie* of Paris, and fortunate is the branch of literature that has such an invaluable help.

A puzzling bit of bibliography comes before us in reference to the anatomical work of Bidloo, who in 1685 issued from Amsterdam his *Anatomia Humani Corporis*. In 1698 the same plates with reference in red ink and nine additional plates were printed at Oxford, and on the engraved title the portion indicating Bidloo's authorship is covered by a slip declaring it to be "The Anatomy of Humane Bodies by Will^m. Cowper, Surgeon," and this is so neatly pasted over as to escape recognition until very closely examined. Cowper, in an address to the reader, says: "These Figures were Drawn after the Life, by the Masterly Painter G. de Lairess, and Engrav'd by no less a Hand, and Represent the Parts of Humane Bodies far beyond any Extant; and were some time since Publish'd by Dr. Bidloo, now Professor of Anatomy in the University of Leyden," and the theory is that Cowper bought the plates and considered that the additions he made were sufficient to justify him in calling the work his own. But this hardly seems to be ideal bibliographical morality, and the view which Bidloo took of the transaction may be gathered from a fifty-four page pamphlet which he issued from Leyden in 1700 entitled *Gulielmus Cowper criminis literarii citatus, coram tribunali Nob. Amp. Soc. Brit. Reg.* Cowper appears to have made a tardy recognition of Bidloo in his *Εὐχαριστία, in qua dotes plurimæ et singulares Godefridi Bidloo, perita anatomica*, [etc.], issued in 1701. But the mystery becomes more involved when we look at a book containing the same plates which was issued at Leyden in 1737 under the supervision of C. B. Albinus who described the work as the second edition of Cowper's book. This seems extraordinary when we remember that Albinus was Professor of Medicine, Anatomy, Surgery and Practice in the University of Utrecht, and could hardly have been ignorant of the incidents connected with Bidloo and Cowper.

